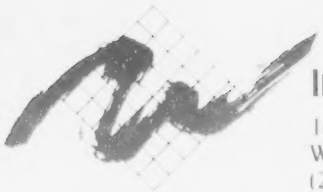

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RAISES AND RECOGNITION: SECRETARIES, CLERICAL WORKERS AND THE UNION WAGE PREMIUM

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THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF SECRETARIAL AND CLERICAL: THE LARGEST WOMEN'S OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY

Secretarial and clerical work (now labelled "administrative support occupations" by the U.S. Bureau of the Census) remains the third largest major occupational category in the U.S., and the largest women's occupation, despite predictions of its demise as a result of technological and economic transformations. Secretaries and other clerical workers have adapted to constant technological changes from the telephone to the typewriter to the dictaphone and the tabulating machine and, most recently, to the computer and the fax machine. Currently, more than 14.2 million full-time workers, or about one out of every six full-time workers, are employed in such diverse occupations as secretaries, bookkeepers, file clerks, computer operators, messengers, dispatchers, bank tellers, teachers' aides, mail carriers and receptionists.[1]

Many secretarial and other clerical jobs, combine both technical and human support skills. They also provide linkages between different parts of organizations and are central to organizational information exchange. For example, Sacks[2] describes the jobs of ward secretaries in a large university teaching hospital.

> They coordinate and organize patient care information, orders, and tests for all patients on the ward. They convey the care plans and orders that are the doctors' ideas about what patients need to the nurses, lab personnel, and people in the dietary department who put the various parts into practice. They link the wards where patients "live" to the departmental people who take an active role in a particular

aspect of their care. Ward secretaries have to mesh the schedules of many people often with diplomacy and some firmness.

Ward secretaries coordinate records via a computerized system that allows direct recording and integration of information at a distance and they coordinate the people--patients and medical personnel. It is only the record keeping aspect of their job, however, that is recognized in their job description.[3]

Almost three out of ten women are employed in these "high tech, high touch" jobs. Of the 14.2 million full-time workers in

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TABLE 1

TEN LARGEST FEMALE-INTENSIVE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT OCCUPATIONS (Full-time, Non-supervisory workers)

OCCUPATIONS	PERCENT OF ALL WORKERS IN ADMIN. SUPPORT	NUMBER OF WORKERS
Secretaries	23.5	3,200,640
Bookkeepers	9.7	1,319,670
Admin. Support (nec)	5.8	796,611
Typists	4.4	603,297
Gen. Office Clerks	4.3	580,248
Receptionists	4.2	572,262
Investigators/Adj.	3.1	424,017
Bank Tellers	2.5	345,280
Data Entry Keyers	2.2	274,977
Insurance Adjusters	1.9	258,864
Total	61.6	8,375,866

Source: IWPR calculations based on the 1988 Current Population Survey.

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the administrative support category, 80 percent are women. Almost three-quarters are employed in occupations that are at least 70 percent female, and six out of ten are employed in the ten largest female-intensive clerical occupations. Of these female-intensive occupational categories, secretarial work is the largest with 3.2 million workers, followed by bookkeepers, administrative support workers (not elsewhere classified), typists, general office clerks, receptionists, investigators and adjusters (except insurance), bank tellers, data entry keyers, and insurance adjusters. (See Table 1.) An additional 3.8 million workers are employed part-time in these occupations. Of these part-time workers, 86 percent are women.

These secretarial and clerical occupations were not always female intensive. In 1870, 97.5 percent of the clerical labor force were men[4]. It was not until the 1920s that administrative support occupations became half female, although the subcategory of secretaries, stenographers and typists were 72 percent female by 1900[5].

The growth of secretarial and other clerical work as a largely female occupational category was the result of four major economic and social trends. First was the growth of paperwork as a result of the growth and centralization of large scale corporations and government bureaucracies. Large-scale organizations required increasing numbers of clerical workers to implement, file and retrieve quantities of correspondence and

documentation[6]. Second, was the invention of new office machines such as the telegraph, telephone and typewriter which provided the technological capability for meeting the demands for communication and record keeping[7]. Third was the growth of "scientific management" which introduced the means of organizing vast amounts of paperwork and, in addition, provided for new management and supervisory opportunities for male workers while stripping secretarial work of its planning, administrative and executive functions[8]. Women were by and large excluded from these new management occupations. Fourth, a large pool of women workers provided a potential labor supply of relatively cheap labor for this occupational category[9].

Despite its loss of management functions, secretarial and other clerical work attracted women, because it paid better than other jobs women could get. In the 1930s, a survey of Northeastern American cities found that women employed as domestic servants were paid $2-$5 per week, factory operatives were paid $1.50-$8 per week, department store sales clerks were paid $1.50-$8 per week. In contrast, secretaries, typists and stenographers (although they were still underpaid compared to male white or blue-collar workers), could earn $6-$15 per week[10].

Women employed full-time as secretaries, typists and stenographers still earn more than women employed as retail workers or as factory operatives ($310 per week in 1988 dollars compared to $199 and $238, respectively) and they still earn less

than men in the same occupations, less than men in male-dominated white collar occupations such as commodities sales representatives, less than men in blue-collar occupations and substantially less tnan men in management-related occupations[11].

The rest of this report focuses on full-time, non-supervisory workers (both male and female) in the administrative support occupations that are female intensive occupations. By definition, at least 70 percent of the workers in these occupations are women. These occupations constitute 74 percent of all administrative support occupations and represent almost 10.5 million workers. Throughout the rest of this report the

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TABLE 2

PERCENT OF ALL SECRETARIAL AND CLERICAL WORKERS IN FEMALE-INTENSIVE OCCUPATIONS WHO ARE SUPERVISORS* BY RACE AND GENDER (Full-time)

	PERCENT SUPERVISORS
Total Men	10.5
White Men	11.0
Men of Color	8.4
Total Women	3.8
White Women	3.7
Women of Color	4.3

* Supervisors comprise 5.3% of all workers in these occupations.

Source: IWPR calculations based on the 1988 Current Population Survey.

term "secretaries and clerical workers" will refer to those workers employed in the administrative support occupations that are female intensive, unless otherwise noted. Since the beginning of the 1980s the percentage of men in these occupations has remained stable. Men--both white and minority--employed in these occupations, are more likely to be supervisors than are white or minority women. About ten percent of all men employed in female intensive secretarial and other clerical occupations are supervisors compared to only three percent of women. (See Table 2.) Men make up 13 percent of the non-supervisory positions in these secretarial and clerical occupations. (See Chart 1.)

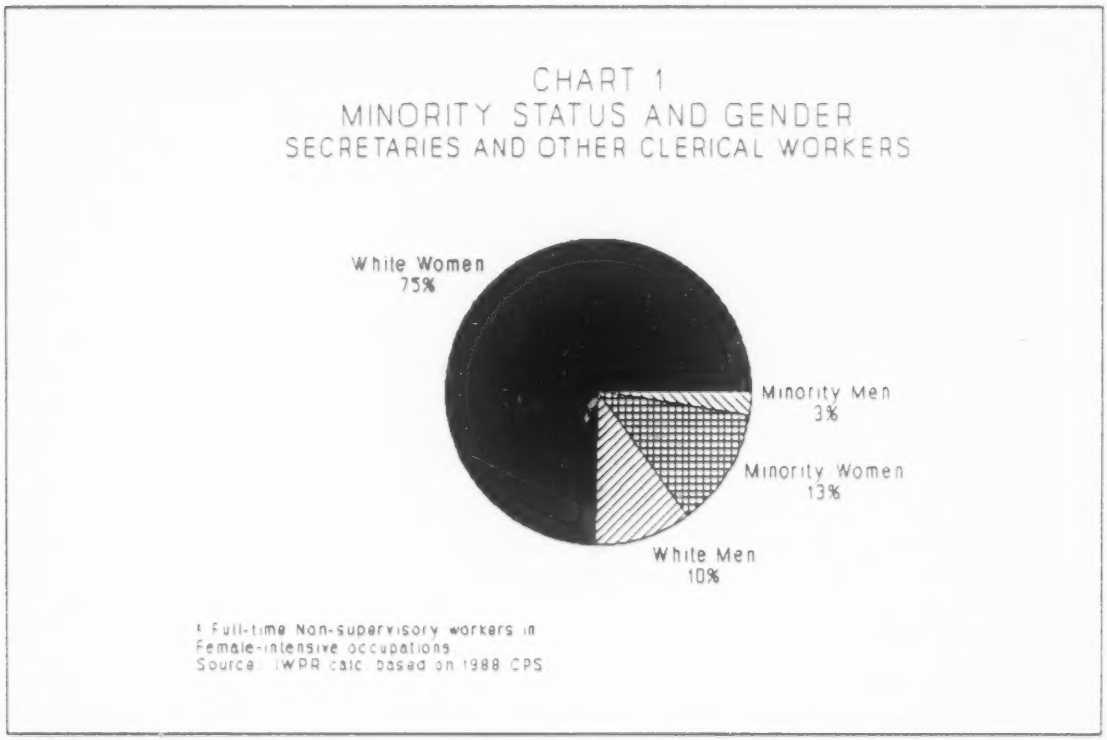

CHART 1

CHALLENGING THE STEREOTYPE: WHO ARE SECRETARIAL AND OTHER CLERICAL WORKERS?

Who are the non-supervisory secretarial and other clerical workers who comprise these female intensive occupations? The image of the secretary portrayed in advice books, magazine articles, novels, comic strips, stage and screen is one of a young, white, single woman working temporarily. Although the majority of secretaries and clerical workers were young, single, white women when the occupations became female intensive during the 1920s[11], this image contrasts with current realities. Secretaries and other clerical workers are not necessarily white, nor are they necessarily young, single or childless. Nor are secretaries and other clerical workers temporary workers; today, the majority work most of their adult lives.

The percentage of minority men and women employed as non-supervisory secretaries and clerical workers has gradually increased since the 1960s and 1970s to its current high of 15 percent--a total of 12.5 percent minority women plus 2.5 percent minority men. (See Chart 1.)

Although many secretaries and other clerical workers are young--47 percent of full-time non supervisory secretaries and 52 percent of full-time, non-supervisory clerical workers are less than 35 years of age--the median age of secretaries is 36 years and the median age of other clerical workers is just under 35 years of age. (See Chart 2.)

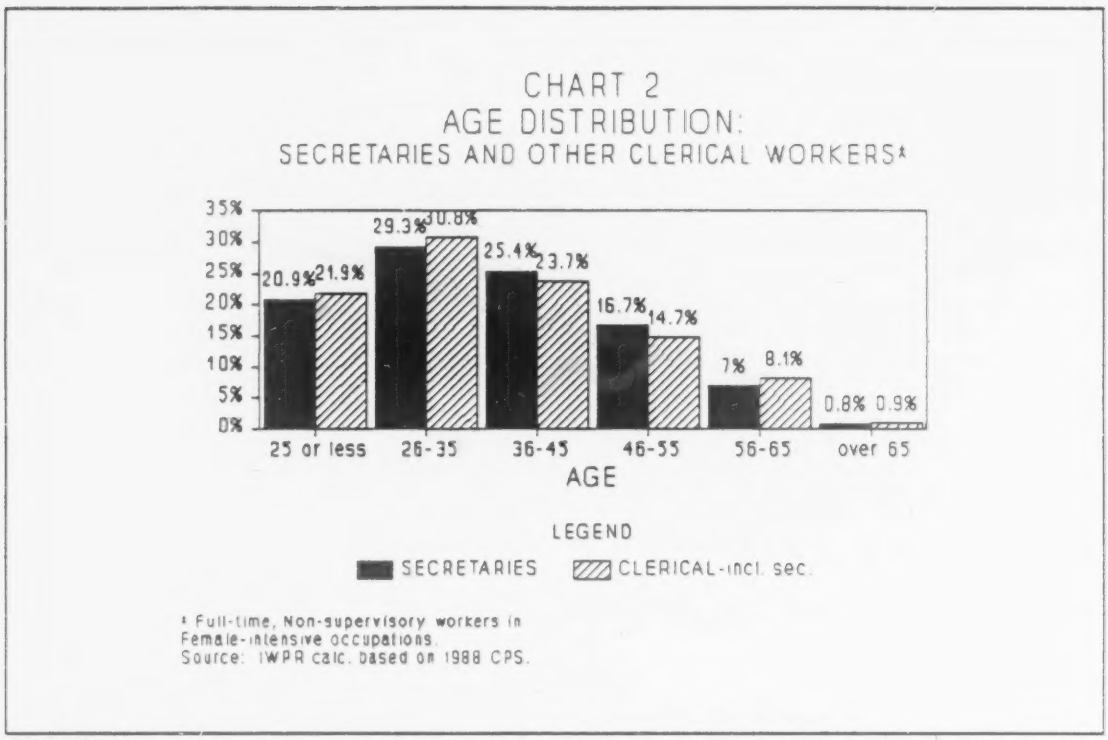

CHART 2

More than half of all secretaries and other clerical workers are married and another one out of five are divorced, widowed or separated. Only 25 percent have never been married. Two out of five have their own children under age 18 who live at home, and half of all married workers, one third of all divorced, separated and widowed workers and one-fifth of all never married workers are responsible for the economic well-being of children. (See Chart 3.)

Finally, full-time, non-supervisory secretaries and clerical workers have been employed for a median of seven years on their current job, and almost one in three has been on the job for more than 10 years, compared to a median of four years for all women workers and 5.8 years for all male workers. (See Chart 4.)

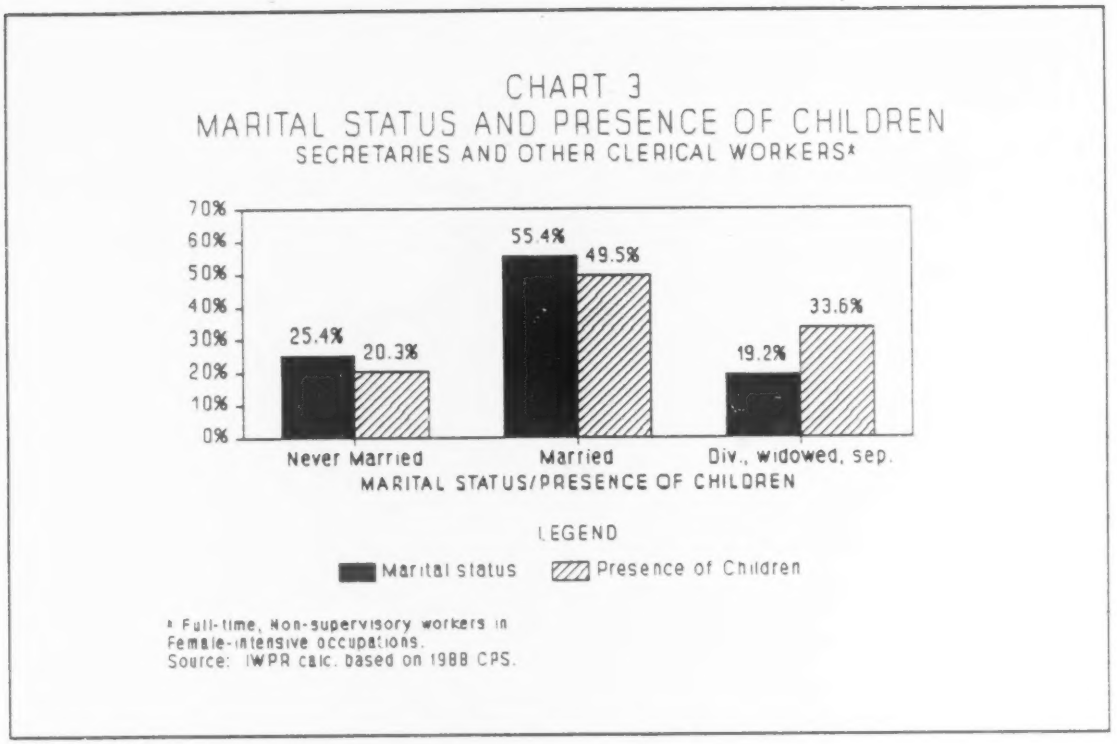

CHART 3

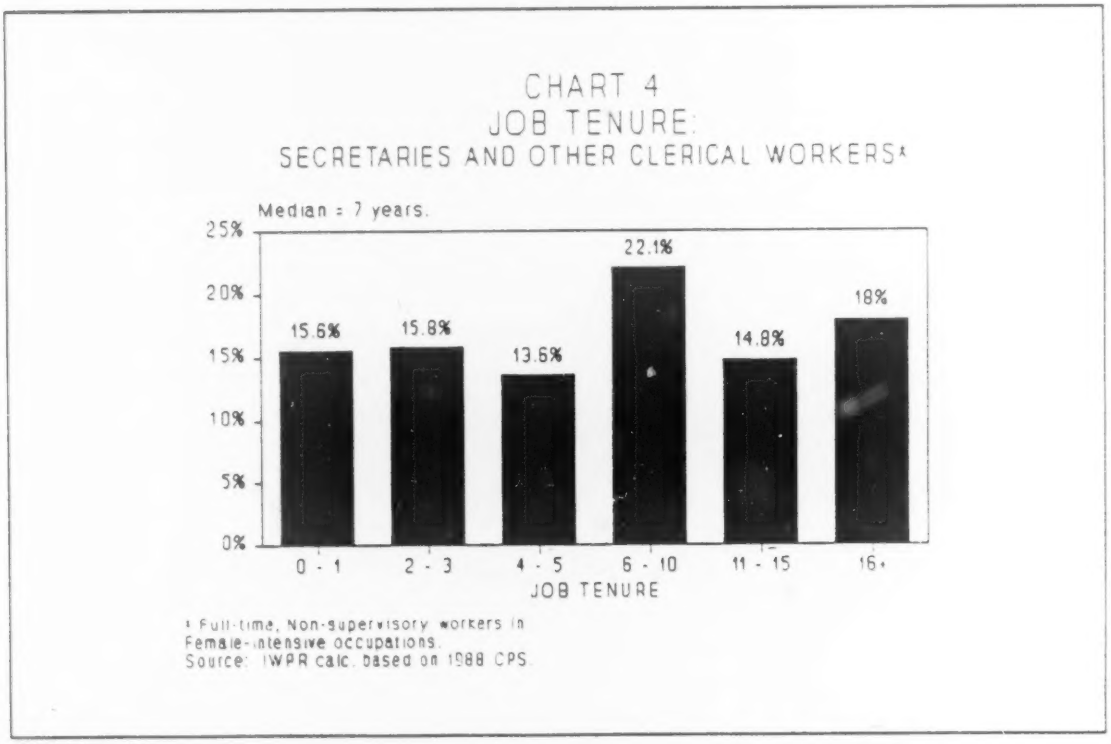

CHART 4

Secretaries and other clerical workers do not appear to be young women working temporarily until they get married, but, instead appear to have substantial attachment to the work force.

CLERICAL WORKERS' EARNINGS ARE CENTRAL TO FAMILY INCOME

The image of the young, single, temporary worker was an argument for the entry level wages paid to secretarial and clerical workers, since men were considered "the real breadwinners"[12]. But here again, the reality is at variance with the image.

Secretaries and clerical workers earn almost half of their family's weekly earnings. Those who are married and have children under age 18 living at home contribute 42 percent of their family's weekly earnings, only slightly less than married women without children (who contribute 44 percent of weekly family earnings). The 13 percent of secretaries and clerical workers who are single, divorced, separated or widowed and who have children under 18 living at home are responsible for 70 percent of their family's weekly earnings. These workers who are most responsible for their families' economic well-being earn the lowest median wages. (See Table 3.)

Table 3

CONTRIBUTION TO FAMILY EARNINGS BY SECRETARIES AND OTHER CLERICAL WORKERS IN FEMALE-INTENSIVE OCCUPATIONS BY FAMILY TYPE (Full-time, Non-supervisory workers)

FAMILY TYPE	MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS	MEDIAN WEEKLY FAMILY EARNINGS	MEDIAN PERCENT OF FAMILY EARNINGS
Married with children	$ 300	$ 720	42.0
Married without children	308	743	44.0
Single with children (including divorced, widowed, separated)	280	400	100.0
Single without children (including divorced, widowed, separated)	300	*	*

* Not Applicable; most such adults live alone, not in families.

Source: IWPR calculations based on the 1988 Current Population Survey

FULL-TIME SECRETARIES AND OTHER CLERICAL WORKERS EARN LESS THAN OTHER NON-PROFESSIONAL, NON-MANAGERIAL WORKERS

Despite the fact that secretaries and clerical workers are responsible for a substantial share of their families' earnings, the median earnings of full-time clerical workers are low compared to other categories of full-time, non-managerial and non-professional workers. The median weekly earnings for all full-time administrative support workers (including supervisors) in 1988 were $318 per week and the median weekly earnings for

non-supervisory secretaries and other clerical workers in female-intensive occupations were $300 per week. In contrast technicians and related support workers earn $448 per week, sales workers earn $385 per week (although women in retail sales earn substantially less), and precision production, craft and repair workers earn $430 per week. Only workers employed in agriculture and in the service occupations (except protective service workers) and operators, fabricators and laborers (with the exception of transport occupations) are paid less than secretaries and other clerical workers. (See Tables 4 and 5.) Managerial-related occupations such as accountants, management analysts, personnel specialists--occupations that were part of clerical work before the advent of "scientific management"--are paid substantially more ($501 per week).

If weekly earnings were earned full-year, the 1988 median annual earnings of full-time non-supervisory secretarial and other clerical workers would be less than $15,600. These earnings are less than 150 percent of the poverty line for a family of four. The 13 percent of these workers who are solely responsible for the support of children and who earn approximately $14,600 per year, have earnings far below what is needed to support their families at a moderate standard of living (defined as 200 percent of the poverty line for a family of four or $23,200). For the 55 percent of secretaries and other clerical workers who are married, their earnings mean the

TABLE 4

MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS OF FULL-TIME WORKERS BY OCCUPATION (1988) (Includes Supervisors)

OCCUPATION	EARNINGS
Managerial and professional specialty	$ 552
Executive, administrative, and managerial	547
Professional specialty	555
Technical, sales, and administrative support	347
Technicians and related support	448
Sales occupations	385
Administrative support, including clerical	318
Service occupations	245
Protective services	417
Services, except protective	221
Precision production, craft and repair	430
Operatives, fabricators, craft and repair	313
Machine operators, assemblers and inspectors	302
Transportation/material moving occupations	389
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers and laborers	277
Farming, forestry, and fishing	229

Source: Bureau of the Census, 1989 Handbook of Labor Statistics, Table 42. p.168.

TABLE 5

MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS FOR THE TEN LARGEST FEMALE-INTENSIVE CLERICAL OCCUPATIONS (Full-time, Non-supervisory workers)

OCCUPATIONS	PERCENT FEMALE	PERCENT MINORITY	MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS
Secretaries	99.2	10.3	$ 300
Bookkeepers	90.8	11.0	300
Admin. Support (nec)	80.2	19.1	325
Typists	94.4	22.0	293
Gen. Office Clerks	82.1	16.6	295
Receptionists	97.3	10.7	250
Investigators/Adj.	75.6	12.7	325
Bank Tellers	91.2	13.7	240
Data Entry Keyers	91.4	27.0	289
Insurance Adjusters	72.6	12.4	370

Source: IWPR calculation based on the 1988 Current Population Survey.

difference between a lower and a moderate standard of living. Among non-supervisory secretarial and clerical occupations, the only occupation that pays close to a moderate standard of living is that of insurance adjuster, the smallest and most highly male of these occupations. (See Table 5.)

STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING WAGES

We have suggested that secretarial and clerical occupations have entry level salaries because they are "women's occupations" in which skills tend to be unrecognized and go unvalued. Table

6, which shows the returns or losses to hourly wages for selected statistically significant characteristics when other factors are held constant, gives additional credence to these assertions. The table shows that, for being a woman, non-supervisory secretaries and clerical workers lose $2.19 per hour in contrast to men in these same occupations. These workers gain only an additional 18 cents per hour for each year of tenure on the job.

The greatest returns in hourly earnings result from having a college diploma ($1.19 per hour), possibly because college educated secretaries hold higher-status jobs such as executive secretary. Fewer than 12 percent of secretaries and other clerical workers in female intensive occupations do have college

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TABLE 6

RETURNS AND LOSSES IN ADDITIONAL HOURLY WAGES FOR SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF WORKERS AND JOBS (Full-time, Non-supervisory, Clerical workers)

CHARACTERISTIC	RETURN/LOSS
Each Additional Year of Age	$ 0.22
Being a College Graduate	1.19
Dropping Out of High School	-0.06
Being Female	-2.19
Each Additional Year of Tenure	0.18
Joining a Union	1.02

Source: IWPR calculations based on the 1988 Current Population Survey. For full details of ordinary least squares regression parameter estimates, from which these findings are generated, see Appendix Table I.

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degrees, however. Aside from earning a college degree, joining a union provides the highest additional returns to hourly wages. Full-time, non-supervisory secretaries and clerical workers who belong to unions, or are covered by union contracts, earn an additional $1.02 per hour compared to workers in the same occupations without union coverage.

The Union Wage Premium

Union membership and collective bargaining are strategies that workers in male-dominated production and crafts occupations have used to increase their wages in order to earn enough to support a family at a moderate standard of living or higher. As white collar, largely women workers, those in the clerical occupations have been historically less likely to use this strategy to increase their wages. Encouraged, in the past, to see themselves as in the work force for a short period of time rather than as permanent workers, dependent on their bosses' approval and encouraged to have pipe dreams of marrying them, secretaries and clerical workers were not encouraged, even by most unions until recently, to seek collective bargaining as a strategy for increasing their wages and gaining respect for their technical and human support skills.

With the growth of service sector unions and with the growth of public employee bargaining laws (currently 26 states and the District of Columbia have legislation which provides some

collective bargaining rights covering state and local government employees), secretaries and clerical workers' salaries have begun to benefit from what economists call the "union premium to wages."

The wage premium for all union workers has been estimated at anywhere from 14 to 45 percent depending on industry, occupation and the state of the economy[13]. Although most studies have examined the union premium in different sectors of the economy and for different occupations, few studies have specifically examined the wage benefit of unionization to secretaries and clerical workers in female-intensive occupations and fewer still have compared the wage benefit to these workers in different sectors of the economy. This report now turns to their issues.

There is a Union Premium for Secretaries and Other Clericals

Currently, 13 percent (about one out of every eight) full-time secretaries and clerical workers in female-intensive occupations are union members or are covered by a union contract. More than one out of every 10 full-time secretaries and one out of 11 all clerical workers in the 10 largest female-intensive clerical occupations are union members or are covered by a union contract. Of these 10 largest occupations, administrative support workers (not elsewhere classified) are the most likely to be unionized--with more than one out of five workers in this status. Other clerical occupations with higher than average

rates of unionization are typists, general office clerks and data entry clerks. (See Table 7.)

TABLE 7

THE UNION WAGE PREMIUM:
SECRETARIES AND OTHER CLERICAL WORKERS
IN THE TEN LARGEST FEMALE-INTENSIVE OCCUPATIONS
(Full-time, Non-supervisory workers)

OCCUPATIONS	PERCENT UNION	MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS UNION	MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS NON-UNION	UNION PREMIUM	UNION PREMIUM AS PERCENT OF EARNINGS
All Female-Intensive Clerical Occupations	9.0	$ 351	$ 295	$ 56	19.0
Secretaries	11.6	328	300	28	9.3
Bookkeepers	6.0	360	300	60	20.0
Admin. Support	20.8	400	302	98	32.5
Typists	17.8	311	288	23	8.0
Gen. Office	17.7	357	280	77	27.5
Receptionists	6.0	316	250	66	26.4
Investigators	10.3	440	320	120	37.5
Bank Tellers	5.0	280	240	40	16.7
Data Entry	13.2	363	280	83	29.6
Insurance Adj.	4.7	350	375	-25*	---

* The small number of total workers in this category and the low rate of unionization may result in this figure being unreliable.

Source: IWPR calculation based on the 1988 Current Population Survey.

Union workers earn substantially higher weekly wages than do non-union workers. Unionized full-time, non-supervisory secretaries and clerical workers earn an additional $56 per week compared to their non-unionized colleagues. All categories of

workers in these occupations benefit from union membership with only one exception--the small, more highly male category of insurance adjuster. The additional earnings range from $23 to $120 per week or an additional nine to 38 percent of these workers' weekly earnings. (See Table 7.)[14]

Part-time as well as full-time workers benefit from union membership. Part-time secretaries and clerical workers earn only $5.25 per hour when they do not belong to unions (this wage is less than a poverty-wage for a family of four, if these workers were employed full-time, full-year). In contrast, part-time workers who belong to unions or are covered by union contracts earn an average of $7.61 per hour (about the median earnings for all clerical workers in female-intensive occupations).

There is a Union Premium in All Sectors of the Economy, Including State and Local Government

Secretaries and other clerical workers are employed in all sectors of the economy--both private and public. Within the private sector, the largest group of full-time, non-supervisory workers in these occupations(about 7.3 million) are employed in the service industries--about four times as many as work in other private industries, i.e., manufacturing, agriculture, mining and construction. Of those 2.4 million workers employed in the public sector, the largest group (1.8 million) work for state and local governments. (See Table 8.)

TABLE 8

THE UNION WAGE PREMIUM:
SECRETARIES AND OTHER CLERICAL WORKERS
IN FEMALE-INTENSIVE OCCUPATIONS BY SECTOR
(Full-time, Non-supervisory workers)

	NUMBER OF WORKERS	PERCENT UNION	MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS ALL	UNION	NON-UNION	UNION PREMIUM
Public						
Federal	604,500	31.6	$ 363	$ 400	$ 346	$ 54
State	701,000	34.1	320	360	300	60
Local	1,107,100	37.0	294	325	275	50
Private						
Service	7,267,400	8.4	305	400	296	104
Others	1,831,700	6.6	325	400	320	80
ALL WORKERS	11,511,700	13.6	309	365	300	65

Source: IWPR calculations based on the 1988 Current Population Survey.

Of all full-time, non-supervisory secretaries and clerical workers those employed by state and local governments are most likely to be union members or covered by union contracts. More than one-third of these workers are covered by collective bargaining agreements.[15]

When we compare the weekly earnings of full-time, non-supervisory secretaries and clerical workers in different sectors of the economy, we find that the state and local government and private service are the lowest paying sectors compared to the federal government and other private industry. When not

unionized, full-time, non-supervisory secretaries and clerical workers employed by local governments are the lowest paid workers--earning only $275 per week. Non-unionized workers earn $21 less per week than private service sector workers and $25 less than state government employees, $45 less per week than workers in other private industries and $71 less than federal government workers. (See Table 9.)

Table 9

RETURNS AND LOSSES IN ADDITIONAL HOURLY WAGES FOR STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT CLERICAL WORKERS (Full-time, Non-supervisory)

CHARACTERISTIC	RETURN/LOSS
Union Membership	$ 1.13
College Degree	0.51
Female	- 3.45
Tenure	0.18

Source: IWPR calculations based on the 1988 Current Population Survey. For full details of the ordinary least squares regression parameter estimates, from which these findings are generated, see Appendix Table II.

Union membership or coverage by a union contract raises these workers weekly earnings substantially. Unionized secretaries and clerical workers gain an additional $50 per week (an additional 18 percent) if working for local governments and $60 per week (or 20 percent) if working for state governments. This union premium is not as large as that for workers in the private service sector, but the $104 weekly bonus for these

latter workers is the result of extremely high rates of unionization and high wages in just a few private service industries--communications, transportation and public utilities (60 percent of the secretarial and other clerical workers in these industries are unionized).

Among state and local government workers, when other factors are taken into consideration, secretarial and clerical workers lose a significant amount ($3.45 per hour) for being female, but gain the most for being members of a union--an additional $1.13 per hour compared to the additional $1.02 per hour gained by unionized secretaries and clerical workers in all sectors of the economy reported earlier. (See Table 9.)

The Wage Premium in Collective Bargaining States

Twenty-six states and the District of Columbia currently have legislation which provides some collective bargaining rights for state, county, municipal and local government workers.[16] Secretarial and other clerical workers in these states benefit from higher wages. Those workers who are union members in these 26 states earn the highest wages--$340 per week compared to the $260 per week for non-unionized workers in states without bargaining rights. Non-unionized workers in states with some collective bargaining rights also benefit from higher wages--wages as high as unionized workers in non-collective bargaining states. Unions also tend to raise wages for non union workers,

making it difficult to determine the full benefit of unionization. (See Table 10.)

TABLE 10

**THE UNION WAGE PREMIUM:
COMPARISON OF MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS FOR
SECRETARIES AND OTHER CLERICAL WORKERS
IN FEMALE-INTENSIVE OCCUPATIONS
IN STATE/LOCAL GOVERNMENT BY UNION MEMBERSHIP
AND RESIDENCE IN A STATE WITH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS
(Full-time, Non-supervisory workers)**

	PERCENT	MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS	
		UNION	NON-UNION
States w/Collective Bargaining Rights	51.7	$ 340	$ 300
States w/o Collective Bargaining Rights	11.4	$ 300	$ 260

Source: IWPR calculations based on the 1988 Current Population Survey.

In addition to the wage premium, unions also increase fringe benefits. In fact, some studies have shown that the union fringe benefit premium exceeds the union wage premium and that studies that examine only the wage premium underestimate the union effect on total compensation[17]. A recent IWPR study[18] found that even among low-wage workers earning $5.80 (in 1988 dollars) or less, those belonging to unions were substantially more likely to have employer-provided health insurance (60 percent compared to 35 percent for non-unionized low-wage workers). Moderate wage

workers (earning between $5.81 and $11.59 per hour) belonging to unions were also more likely to have health insurance than those who were not covered by union contracts (88 percent compared to 72 percent). Workers in the public sector, currently one of the most unionized sectors, were the most likely of all low-wage workers to have health insurance.

CONCLUSIONS, CURRENT NEEDS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Unlike popular stereotypes, secretaries and other clerical workers are likely to be permanently attached to the workforce (with an average of seven years on the job in contrast to four year for all women workers and 5.8 years for all male workers), married women with children who are responsible for more than 40 percent of their family's weekly earnings. Yet they are still paid as entry-level workers, earning substantially less than other categories of management-related and non-managerial, non-professional workers.

Membership in unions, for the one out of eight workers that belong or are covered by a union contract, results in significantly higher wages, especially for the high proportion of unionized secretaries and other clerical workers employed by state and local governments. These workers earn an additional $1.13 per hour. Clearly, unionization is an important strategy for raising secretarial and clerical wages as well as for providing them with additional benefits such as health care.

Wages and benefits are not, however, the only concerns of secretaries and other clerical workers. Among their additional concerns are the impact of technology on their jobs, the lack of recognition of their skills, and the barriers to career mobility.

The Impact of Technology

As noted in this report, the work of secretaries and other clerical workers has continuously been affected by technological change, beginning with the introduction of the telephone and the typewriter. During the last 10 years, new microprocessing and telecommunications technologies have been introduced and applied rapidly in offices, resulting in the modification and redistribution of clerical jobs. We know that these new technologies are having an important effect on secretarial and clerical jobs, the question is how?

Numbers of authors have argued that women's opportunities have become more limited with the introduction of this latest technology and that declines in the number of full-time jobs available to secretaries and clerical workers can be anticipated along with the increase in temporary, home-based and part-time work[19]. Minority women's jobs within the clerical sector are clustered in a relatively few "back office" occupations such as data entry clerks, which are being negatively affected by technological change[20]. In contrast, other authors have argued that women have gained jobs and wages where productivity growth

(as a result of technological change) has been the greatest[21]. Computer and telecommunications technology can increase productivity and alter demand for products and services; it can result in additional jobs and higher wages, but it can also result in deskilling and the loss of jobs. The outcome is not inevitable, it depends on the health of the economy, on managers and on workers and their unions[22].

Recognition of Skills

The findings in this report suggest that increasing tenure on the job results in relatively small increases in pay, possibly because the additional skills that secretaries and other clerical workers obtain are neither recognized nor valued. For example, the ward secretaries in a university teaching hospital, interviewed by Sacks[23], were responsible for coordinating and organizing patient-care information through the use of a computerized records system and coordinating and organizing people--patients and medical personnel--through the use of diplomatic skills. Many secretarial and clerical jobs require this combination of "high touch and high tech" skills. In the case of the ward secretaries only their technical, not their human relations skills were recognized in their job evaluations. In other cases, the reverse is true.

In a recent study of New York City clerical workers in finance, insurance and real estate, Pullman and Syzmanski[24] found that 87 percent of the women that they interviewed thought that

their skills were increased by technology. Yet, they reported that managers often failed to reward these changed jobs with promotions or additional pay. When asked if people were promoted as a result of working with computers, 70 percent said they would not get raises a result of their new skills. Seemingly the skills gained and used by secretarial and clerical workers go unrewarded and unrecognized, regardless of whether they are technological or human relations skills.

Barriers to Career Mobility

When the secretarial occupation lost its planning, administrative and executive functions--functions that were though to require a "masculine turn of mind"--as a result of the growth of "scientific management," the outcome was artificial barriers between the two occupations. Managerial personnel are now recruited directly from college rather than promoted from entry-level positions through internal job ladders[25]. Only a small portion of secretaries and other clerical workers can aspire to be supervisors (about 15 percent according to our findings, and men are more likely than women to fulfill this aspiration). And supervisors seldom become managers. As one clerical supervisor said,

> The managers were the fellows they took out of college and they hired them off the street and they put them in charge of the women supervisors[26].

Job mobility for secretaries and clerical workers tend to be lateral rather than vertical. Often, there is neither a pay scale nor a promotion ladder that recognizes increases in skill, ability or experience[27].

The demand for meaningful, challenging, dignified and rewarding work must come from secretaries and clerical workers themselves. We have shown that insofar as wages and benefits are concerned, union membership and collective bargaining aid secretaries and clerical in obtaining these demands. In addition to bargaining for higher wages and better benefit packages, unions, and especially public sector unions, have been particularly involved in issues such as: gaining pay equity adjustments for women and minority men whose skills have traditionally been undervalued; bargaining for work and family policies such as parental and family leave, child care and flexible work schedules; and career development.

1. Research reported here is based on data from the 1988 Current Population Survey, a monthly survey of some 60,000 nationally-representative households conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. IWPR's analyses are based on original computer tabulations of both the May 1988 public use file and the 1988 annual compilation of 12 months of data, the merged earnings file, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The sample analyzed here, nonsupervisory workers in secretarial and other female-intensive clerical occupations, amounted to nearly 23,000 workers.

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14. It should be noted, however, that the total dollar amount of these union bonuses cannot be solely attributed to union membership. Based on the findings in Appendix Table 1, we would estimate that about 80 percent of this bonus can be attributed to union membership.

15. The finding that a smaller percentage of federal government clerical workers are unionized than are state and local workers may seem surprising. Among federal government workers, however, female-intensive clerical occupations are substantially less likely to be unionized than are workers in all clerical occupations--60 percent of whom are union members or covered by union contracts. This difference can be explained by the extremely high rates of unionization in large, non-female-intensive occupations classified as clerical by the U.S. Bureau of the Census such as mail carriers.

16. These states include Alaska, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin and the District of Columbia.

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APPENDIX I

PARAMETER ESTIMATES OF ORDINARY LEAST SQUARES REGRESSION MODEL OF HOURLY WAGES IN FEMALE INTENSIVE OCCUPATIONS

VARIABLE	PARAMETER ESTIMATE	STANDARD ERROR	p-value
Intercept	4.600	0.604	0.000
AGE	0.222	0.031	0.000
AGESQ	-0.002	0.000	0.000
UNION	1.025	0.348	0.003
COLLEGE	1.192	0.179	0.000
HSDROP	-0.056	0.471	0.906
FEMALE	-2.193	0.244	0.000
TEN1	0.176	0.021	0.000
TEN1SQ	-0.002	0.001	0.001
UNTEN	0.017	0.021	0.405
STATE	-0.019	0.284	0.947
UNSTATE	-0.642	0.522	0.218
LOCAL	-1.284	0.251	0.000
UNLOCAL	0.740	0.470	0.115
FED	0.186	0.347	0.592
UNFED	-0.780	0.628	0.214
OTHER	0.349	0.174	0.046
UNOTH	-0.867	0.793	0.275

R-square 0.224
Adj. R-square 0.219

Source: IWPR calculations based on the 1988 Current Population Survey.

APPENDIX II

PARAMETER ESTIMATES OF ORDINARY LEAST SQUARES REGRESSION MODEL OF HOURLY WAGES IN STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

VARIABLE	PARAMETER ESTIMATE	STANDARD ERROR	p-value
Intercept	9.664	1.690	0.000
AGE	0.010	0.077	0.895
AGESQ	-0.000	0.001	0.824
UNION	1.134	0.466	0.015
COLLEGE	0.514	0.390	0.189
HSDROP	1.730	1.396	0.216
FEMALE	-3.449	0.742	0.000
TEN1	0.180	0.053	0.001
TEN1SQ	-0.003	0.002	0.086
UNTEN	0.030	0.039	0.444

R-square 0.214
Adj. R-square 0.196

Source: IWPR calculations based on the 1988 Current Population Survey.